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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6359
INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 1544
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0398
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1962
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0921
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA
BAGHDAD FOR DMCCULLOUGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/16/2019
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [NI](#) [EK](#) [HR](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: WEAPONS LADEN PLANE IMPOUNDED IN KANO;
EQUATORIAL GUINEAN MOD CONFIRMS OWNERSHIP

REF: HARPOLE (MALABO)-RYAN (ABUJA) 06/19 E-MAIL

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

11. (SBU) A Ukrainian aircraft said to be "fully loaded" with 18 crates of weapons was impounded by a Nigerian military intelligence unit at Kano's Aminu Kano International Airport shortly after 4:00 AM on June 17. The plane, an Antonov 12 with registration number MEM 4-060 and tail number UR-CAK, was claimed the following day by the Ukrainian company Meridian. Mykola Minyaylo, Meridian's Director General, maintained in the Nigerian press that "the plane was flying from Zagreb, Croatia to Equatorial Guinea and landed in Nigeria to refuel." Lagos-based BusinessDay online points out that the Ukrainian news agency (UNIAN) has said its country's main arms export agency Ukrspetseksport disavows the cargo and insists it belongs to Croatia. (Note: A preliminary report had said that the aircraft was forced to make an emergency landing in Kano due to mechanical problems. This report was later refuted. End Note.) Conflicting news reports maintain that either a Nigerian customs agent or a clearing agent in the employ of an unnamed Nigerian domestic carrier is in custody and undergoing questioning, in addition to a Nigerian airport official who allegedly allowed the plane to land without clearance from his superiors. The detained crew of the plane is variously reported to consist of between four and seven Ukrainian nationals. According to press reports, the radar at Kano airport was not functioning at the time and authorities were unaware the plane was in Nigerian airspace prior to its arrival.

12. (C) INL Off, currently in Kano, spoke with the Director of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency at Kano airport who told him that the plane's cargo were mostly ammunition but with various weapons in small quantities. Military officials in Kano have been tasked with leading the investigation in conjunction with the State Security Service (SSS) and Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA). INL Off was told that he would not be given access to the plane, nor additional information about the ongoing investigation. Nevertheless, Poloff Abuja was told by Poloff Malabo (ref e-mail) that the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea's Ministry of Defense (GREGMOD) has confirmed to Embassy Malabo that the plane was loaded with weapons

purchased by GREGMOD.

13. (C) COMMENT: The GON apparently suspects that the weapons were ultimately destined for Niger Delta militants, and press reports claim that documents recovered by the military during a recent attack on the main camp of Delta militant Tom Polo identify Ukraine as one of the militants' primary sources of weapons. The Equatorial Guinean MOD's claim of ownership notwithstanding, we expect suspicions that the arms were destined for the Niger Delta will persist. We also recall that the Government of Equatorial Guinea blamed the February 17 attack on the Presidential Palace in Malabo on militants from the Niger Delta, so there may be no shortage of suspicion on all sides. This incident also underscores the lack of air traffic control and monitoring capabilities at some of Nigeria's international airports. End Comment.

SANDERS